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School and Home Program, Flint, Michigan.

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An experimental program in Flint, Michigan, was designed to raise the academic level of underachieving children by involving their parents in the daily reading exercises and study habits of their children. Children were given materials including booklets made from old basal readers and file boxes for word cards. Parents were given instruction in helping children use these materials and suggestions for preparing children for school. Reading aloud to children was encouraged. The children involved in the program were Negro, primarily from low-income families where the parents had only limited educational backgrounds. Two elementary schools participated during 1961-62, with a total of 1,100 children in grades K-6. The Gates Reading Tests were used as pretests and post-tests to measure the effectiveness of the program and to compare children in it with a control group made up of children in another elementary school. Greater gains in vocabulary than in comprehension were noted in all groups, with children in the two experimental groups showing significantly greater gains than those in the control group. Parents who were surveyed regarding the program were enthusiastic about their own involvement and about their children's progress. References are included. (MD)

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TITLE I

SCHOOL AND HOME PROGRAM
Flint, Michigan

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SCHOOL AND HOME PROGRAM
FLINT, MICHIGAN

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U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
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Office of Education
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FOREWORD

This project report is part of an independent study of selected exemplary programs for the education of disadvantaged children completed by the American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, Calif., under contract with the U.S. Office of Education.

The researchers report this project significantly improved the educational attainment of the disadvantaged children involved. Other communities, in reviewing the educational needs of the disadvantaged youngsters they serve, may wish to use this project as a model - adapting it to their specific requirements and resources.

Division of Compensatory Education
Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education

THE SCHOOL AND HOME PROGRAM OF FLINT, MICHIGAN

Introduction

This program, "School and Home: Focus on Achievement" was an experimental program designed to raise the academic level of underachieving elementary school children by involving parents in the daily reading exercises and study habits of their children.

The children were Negroes primarily from low-income families living in the industrial city of Flint, Michigan. With few exceptions, the parents of these children had come from the rural South to seek employment in local industrial plants. Their educational backgrounds were quite limited.

The experiment was undertaken in two elementary public schools during the 1961-62 school year. It involved approximately 1,100 children enrolled in kindergarten through grade six. In the fall of 1962, this program was expanded to a third elementary school in Flint, and the total population in the experimental group became 2,300. Data for the third school is not available.

A control group was established in another Flint public elementary school and was composed of children who represented socio-economic backgrounds similar to the experimental group.

The Gates Reading tests were used to measure the effectiveness of the program, which was indicated by the greater increase in vocabulary and comprehension scores of the experimentals over the controls.

Personnel

A. Central Office Consultant

A consultant in the employment of the Flint Community Schools designed the program. For replication of this program, a coordinator will be required to take the place of this consultant in organizing and implementing the program.

B. Teachers. (Voluntary, part-time.)

Second- and fifth-grade teachers taught in the program on a daily basis integrated with their normal teaching duties. Besides meeting

with the parents (see under Methodology), they also gave the children daily reading assignments, word lists, and suggested books the children might like to read.

C. Secretary. (Part-time.)

For typing, duplication, and other clerical duties.

D. Volunteers.

Mothers put in occasional duties as home visitors, home counselors, and attendance officers.

Methodology: General

The experimental program was based upon a rationale described by Smith (1963) as follows:

> The theoretical frame of reference for the study is based on the [theory] that the group in which the individual is socialized influences his motivation to achieve in school.
>
> It seemed that a program designed to raise the achievement of children who lacked the necessary motivation to achieve adequately must involve working with these children's "significant others" [defined as those people who are important to an individual] for the purpose of getting them to expect more of these children. The students were expected to "internalize" the expectations of these "significant others" and, therefore, to expect more of themselves. It was predicted that this change in their attitudes and values would take place as they learned their values from "significant others."
>
> The "significant others" for elementary school children were assumed to be parents and teachers.

The parents were made to realize that their attitudes and values greatly influenced those of their children and that unless they were aware of these values, they could not set the kind of example that would bring about desirable attitudes and habits toward schoolwork. In addition to getting parents involved with their own children, some of the parents worked to get all parents involved in the program by making home calls, followed up by telephone reminders. The result of this effort was greater participation by parents than anticipated by the program's initiators. The parents were asked to do these things (Flint, 1963):

a) Provide a quiet period in the home each day for reading and study assigned by the teacher.

b) Read regularly to their children, including preschool-age children.

c) Read regularly in the presence of their children.

d) Listen to their children read.

e) Show interest in their children's work by asking questions and giving praise when deserved and encouragement when needed.

f) Prevent the school-age child's work from being damaged or destroyed by preschool-age children.

g) See that the child has pencils and paper at school and at home so that he has the tools necessary for doing a good job.

h) Get the child to bed at a regular time each night so that he gets the proper sleep and rest.

i) Get the child up each morning with adequate time for a good breakfast.

j) Remind the child of work papers, books, etc., that should be returned to school. (Young children need this assistance.)

k) Have the child leave home with the attitude of going to school for the purpose of learning.

Teachers met with parents and explained the objectives of the program and the participation expected from the parents. The teachers also met with each other on a monthly basis to discuss progress of the program, problem areas, and materials and techniques used in the program. The teachers performed the activities normal to school instruction such as daily assignments, wall charts on assignment performance, sending books home with students, teacher/parent conferences as required, and directions to the clerical help for typing and duplication.

Methodology: Specific

A. Read-Aloud Program

Parents were encouraged tc read with their children in order to stimulate interest in reading and to show the children that reading is important to parents. This not only improved reading performance but also allowed parent-child interactions conducive to a more desirable family relationship. The Read-Aloud Program consisted of orientation of the parents at the introductory meeting with teachers and instructions on a sheet and in a booklet. A 3 x 5 card imprinted with the title of each study step was also included in these materials as a study/instruction aid. The Instruction Sheet for the parent looked like this (Flint, 1963):

HOW -- PARENTS CAN HELP THEIR CHILDREN STUDY READING WORDS

Children benefit from studying with another person as well as from individual study. This other person may be a class mate, an older child, or a parent.

It is very encouraging to children to have a parent spend some time with him while he is studying. We must always keep in mind that it is the child who must do the studying not the parent. The parent only assists and gives encouragement.

When you help your child study his reading words, we suggest that you and the child follow the study steps. Listed below are these study steps as well as suggestions about what the child should do and what the parent should do.

The child should:	STUDY STEPS
1. LOOK AT THE WORD	- Look at only one word at a time. - Think about its shape and how it begins and ends.
2. SAY THE WORD	- Say it softly. Think about how it sounds.

3. TELL WHAT IT MEANS - The meaning should be in <u>your own words</u>.

4. TRY TO USE IT IN A SENTENCE - Your sentence should be a good sentence -- it should make sense.

5. CHECK THE WORD - Check to see that you have given the correct meaning and used it in a sentence.

   If you made a mistake, start with <u>Step 1</u> and go through the steps again.

<u>The parent should</u>:

1. Sit close to the child so that you can see what the child is doing.

2. See that the child pronounces the word correctly.

3. Help the child check his word so that he does not learn the wrong meaning for it. If this happens, encourage him to go through the study steps again until he:
   a. can say it correctly
   b. can say the meaning in his own words
   c. can use it in a sentence

<u>Remember that you always can help your child more when you are patient and not hurried</u>.

In addition to the above instructions, a booklet titled "Read Aloud to Your Children" was given to the parents. In this booklet, the How, When, and What of reading as well as the motivational techniques for both parent and child were presented. To stimulate reading of new books, lists of books for various grade levels available at the local Flint Public Libraries were included.

B. Bookworm Club

A reading incentive program called the Bookworm Club was initiated in this program. Children in grades two through six were given a tally-sheet on which they placed stickers provided for the 15 segments of a

"bookworm" - one for each new book read. This program allowed each child to earn a "bookworm" lapel button when six segments were covered, and a "diploma" when all 15 were covered. Children were also given a booklet called "My Reading Record" in which they would write the author, title, publisher, data, and a summary of each book they read.

C. Materials provided for home study

A child's dictionary was made available to each family with a child in grade 4, 5, or 6. To provide special help with vocabulary development, each child was provided with a file box for word cards. Each child recorded on a card in his file box every word that caused difficulty. He was encouraged to study his words at school and to take them home for study. In addition to the dictionaries and file cards, multi-level reading materials were provided for the children.

D. Reading booklets

Reading booklets for the children were made by cutting up primary level reading textbooks which were no longer used by the schools. Individual stories from these books were stapled together between colorful covers and decorated with pictures.

Children who have trouble reading resist thick books because they lack confidence in their reading abilities. These children will readily read the one-story booklets which have no grade-level identification. Older children will read these stories, not aware that many of the stories contain preprimer level vocabulary. The children develop a feeling of accomplishment and, therefore, gain self-confidence.

Mothers did the cutting and stapling of the one-story booklets and they felt a sense of participation in the reading program of their children. The children were aware of their mothers' participation, and this stimulated additional interest and interaction on the part of children and parents.

Evaluation

A. Measures of Achievement

All students, both in the two experimental groups and the control groups, were given Form 1 of the Gates Revised Reading Tests as pretest

and Form 2 as posttest. This test measures the reading vocabulary and reading comprehension of primary school children.

In the first evaluation, the tests were administered in November 1961 and May 1962. The normal gain in reading age over that period was expected to be 5 months.

Children in the two experimental schools showed overall gains of 5.4 months in reading during the 5-month period (time between pre- and posttests). Children in the control school showed overall gains of 2.7 months in reading during this period. Gains made by experimental school C were generally greater than those made by experimental school B, which entered the program later than experimental school C. Children in all schools showed greater gains in reading vocabulary than in reading comprehension. Since reading comprehension encompasses a broader base than vocabulary, equivalent progress in comprehension can be expected as more time elapses.

Tables 1 and 2 compare vocabulary and comprehension mean gains made by second-grade children in the two experimental schools with those made by children in the control school. Children in the two experimental schools made greater mean gains in vocabulary and comprehension than did children in the control school. The mean gain differences are highly significant (at the .01 level using Z-scores) for vocabulary for experimental schools B and C when compared with control school A. The mean gain differences for comprehension are also highly significant for experimental school C but are not significant for experimental school B.

Table 1

MEAN GAINS IN VOCABULARY FOR SECOND-GRADE PUPILS IN THE SCHOOL AND HOME PROGRAM, 1961-62

Schools	N	Mean Gains	p
Control A	66	3.6	
Experimental B	82	5.5	.01
Experimental C	71	5.8	.01

[Source: Table 1, page 8, Flint Public Schools (1963)]

Table 2

MEAN GAINS IN COMPREHENSION FOR SECOND-GRADE PUPILS
IN THE SCHOOL AND HOME PROGRAM, 1961-62

Schools	N	Mean Gains	p
Control A	68	4.1	
Experimental B	82	4.9	N.S.
Experimental C	71	7.1	.01

[Source: Table 2, page 9, Flint Public Schools (1963)]

Tables 3 and 4 compare vocabulary and comprehension mean gains made by fifth-grade children in the two experimental schools with those made by children in the control school. Table 3 shows that children in the two experimental schools made significantly greater gains in vocabulary than did children in the control school. Table 4 shows that the gains made in comprehension are moderately significantly greater for children in experimental school C but not significantly greater for children in experimental school B.

Table 3

MEAN GAINS IN VOCABULARY FOR FIFTH-GRADE PUPILS
IN THE SCHOOL AND HOME PROGRAM, 1961-62

Schools	N	Mean Gains	p
Control A	63	1.4	
Experimental B	70	6.4	.01
Experimental C	54	6.1	.01

[Source: Table 3, page 9, Flint Public Schools (1963)]

Table 4

MEAN GAINS IN COMPREHENSION FOR FIFTH-GRADE PUPILS IN THE SCHOOL AND HOME PROGRAM, 1961-62

Schools	N	Mean Gains	p
Control A	63	1.8	
Experimental B	70	1.3	N.S.
Experimental C	54	5.7	.05

[Source: Table 4, page 10, Flint Public Schools (1963)]

A comparison of gains made when vocabulary and comprehension are combined shows that second-grade children in the two experimental schools made significantly greater gains than did second-grade children in the control school. (See Table 5.)

Table 5

MEAN GAINS IN COMBINED VOCABULARY AND COMPREHENSION FOR SECOND-GRADE PUPILS IN THE SCHOOL AND HOME PROGRAM, 1961-62

Schools	N	Mean Gains	p
Control A	63	3.9	
Experimental B	82	5.1	.05
Experimental C	71	6.4	.01

[Source: Table 5, page 10, Flint Public Schools (1963)]

A comparison of gains made when vocabulary and comprehension are combined does not show significant differences for fifth-grade children in experimental school B when compared with control School A (see

Table 6.) Highly significant differences are disclosed, however, for fifth-grade children in experimental school C.

Table 6

MEAN GAINS IN COMBINED VOCABULARY AND COMPREHENSION FOR FIFTH-GRADE PUPILS IN THE SCHOOL AND HOME PROGRAM, 1961-62

Schools	N	Mean Gains	p
Control A	60	1.7	
Experimental B	70	3.7	N.S.
Experimental C	53	6.0	.01

[Source: Table 6, page 10, Flint Public Schools (1963)]

These gains represent a trend which was maintained in the 1962-63 academic year, although no official evaluation or detailed statistical analysis and interpretation was carried out after 1961-62.

B. Other Evaluation Indices

One questionnaire was sent to each family in the two experimental schools to ascertain what opinion parents held about this program. Parents indicated that they felt the program helped the children with school work and that they would like to have the program continued. They also indicated that their involvement had been very helpful to them as well, indicating that it helped them improve their academic skills.

A survey was undertaken in the two experimental school communities to determine if parents had set aside a quiet time in the home for home study and for reading. Results of this survey showed that 90 percent of the children in the two schools returned completed questionnaires to their teachers.

Teachers said they noted improvement in children's work habits and in their attitudes toward school work.

C. Modifications and Suggestions

Summer Activities

At the end of the spring semester, 1962, the parents were given instructions for the continuation of the "Focus on Achievement" program into the summer months. Many activities, in addition to the daily "quiet-time" for reading and studying, "read-aloud" between child and parent, and check-out of library books practiced during the school year, were suggested. Some are listed here:

a) Subscribe to Summer Weekly Reader

b) Encourage children to listen to news items, and discuss these with them.

c) Work daily on the list of words, adding new words gained from library books.

d) Take children on trips that provide learning experiences (airport, radio and TV stations, planetarium, zoo, bridges, art centers, libraries, etc., were suggested).

e) During family discussions, use the dictionary and encyclopedia.

f) Have children keep a diary and report on any trips taken.

Budget

The total per pupil costs for 1961-62 and 1962-63 together, not counting salaries, was $3.50. Total expenditures for the 2 years amounted to approximately $8,400, excluding the services of the central office consultant, secretary, and typist. These were either paid on a part-time basis or were voluntary. There were no teachers' salaries to be paid, as the teachers volunteered to help in the program.

The total expenditure for the 1961-62 year was $1,600 for 1,100 students in two schools. The largest item of expense for this year was the children's dictionaries. The total expenditure for the 1962-63 year was $6,800 for 2,300 children in three schools. The

largest items of expense for this year were SRA reading materials, typewriters, and workshop materials. Items purchased for the program were: dictionaries for all students, metal file boxes and 3 x 5 vocabulary cards (as a vocabulary learning aid), Gates Reading Tests, Bookworm Club materials, typewriters, alphabet guides, 3 x 5 lined cards, SRA reading materials, and workshop materials.

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For More Information

Dr. Mildred B. Smith
Area Director of Elementary Education
Administration Building
Flint Public Schools
Flint, Michigan

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